

Eipo language

Eipo (Epomek), or **Lik**, is a Mek language of the eastern highlands of Eipumek District, Pegunungan Bintang Regency, West Papua. It is spoken by the Eipo people who live along the Eipo River. A large percentage of its vocabulary is shared with Una and Tanime, and they form one dialect area.^[3]

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|------------------------|---|
| Eipo | |
| <i>Lik</i> | |
| Native to | Indonesia |
| Region | Eipo River area in Eipumek District, Pegunungan Bintang Regency, West Papua |
| Ethnicity | Eipo people |
| Native speakers | (3,000 cited 1987) ^[1] |
| Language family | Trans–New Guinea <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mek ▪ Eastern ▪ Eipo |
| Writing system | Latin |
| Language codes | |
| ISO 639-3 | eip |
| Glottolog | eipo1242 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/eipo1242) ^[2] |

Classification

Eipo belongs to the Eastern branch of Mek languages, which is a family of closely related languages belonging to the larger grouping of Trans-New Guinea languages.

Geographic distribution

The Eipo language is spoken by about 3,000 people along the Eipo River in the valley of Epomek, which is situated in the eastern highlands of West Papua.^[1]

Phonology

Consonants

Eipo exhibits the following 16 phonemic consonants:^[4]

Consonant phonemes

| | <u>Bilabial</u> | <u>Labio-dental</u> | <u>Alveolar</u> | <u>Palatal</u> | <u>Velar</u> |
|--------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| <u>Plosive</u> | p b | | t d | c | k g |
| <u>Fricative</u> | | β f | s | | |
| <u>Nasal</u> | m | | n | | ŋ |
| <u>Tap or flap</u> | | | r | | |
| <u>Approximant</u> | | | | j | |

- /p/ indicates a labialized [p^wθ].^[5]
- /c/ indicates a palatalized [t^j].^[5]

Vowels

Eipo has five phonemic vowels.^[4]

Monophthong phonemes

| | <u>Front</u> | <u>Central</u> | <u>Back</u> |
|-----------------|--------------|----------------|-------------|
| <u>Close</u> | i | | u |
| <u>Open-mid</u> | e | | o |
| <u>Open</u> | | a | |

Diphthongs are not regarded as separate phonemes.^[4]

Grammar

Morphology

Eipo is generally isolating language, but exhibits an elaborate system of agglutination in verb formation.

Syntax

The usual word order of Eipo is subject-object-verb (SOV).

Deictics

Eipo has only four basic spatial deictics, which are usually accompanied by pointing gestures, since the deictics are used during face-to-face communication to refer to positions relative to the person.^{[6]:119}

- a- 'here'
- ei- 'up there'
- ou-, u- 'down there'
- or-, er- 'across there' ('across-valley')

Interrogatives

Eipo has many compound interrogatives:^{[6]:95}

- *yate* 'what?, which?, what kind of?'
 - *yate anye* 'who?'
 - *yate ate* 'why? (what for)'
 - *yate arye* 'why? (what reason)'
 - *yate-barye* 'why?'
 - *yate-sum* 'when? (what day/time)'
- *dan-* 'where?, where to, whence'
 - *dan-segum* 'whereabouts? (approximate location)'
 - *dan-tam* ("where side") 'where, whence, whereto'
 - *dan-ak* ("where at") 'where, whence, whereto'

Writing system

Eipo is not historically a written language, but in recent decades a Latin alphabet has been devised for it. The letter values are mostly those of the IPA letters given above, with the exceptions of /β/ ⟨w⟩, /ŋ/ ⟨ng⟩, /r/ ⟨r⟩, and /j/ ⟨y⟩.

References

1. [Eipo](https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/eip/) (<https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/eip/>) at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)
2. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "[Eipomek](http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/eipo1242)" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/eipo1242>). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
3. [Heeschen 1998](#), p. 18.
4. [Heeschen 1998](#), p. 117.
5. [Heeschen 1998](#), p. 118.
6. Pawley, Andrew; Hammarström, Harald (2018). "The Trans New Guinea family". In Palmer, Bill (ed.). *The Languages and Linguistics of the New Guinea Area: A Comprehensive Guide*. The World of Linguistics. 4. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton. pp. 21–196. [ISBN 978-3-11-028642-7](#).

- Heeschen, Volker (1998). *An Ethnographic Grammar of the Eipo Language (spoken in the central mountains of Irian Jaya (West New Guinea), Indonesia)*. Berlinref=harv: Reimer.

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